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SMALLPOX OUTBREAK AT POTEAU, OKLA.

The following account of an outbreak of smallpox at Poteau, Okla., is furnished by an officer of the Public Health Service who cooperated with officers of the State board of health in combating the spread of the disease at that place.

On December 5, 1921, a prisoner in the county jail at Poteau was taken sick. The man had been in Kansas City, Mo., from November 16–27, during which time an epidemic of smallpox of the virulent type was present in that city. On December 6 the prisoner expressed his belief that he "was getting smallpox," when he was visited by the jail physician. On December 9 the eruption appeared. The disease was of the discrete type, with a few confluent patches. The patient recovered. He had been successfully vaccinated 44 years previously.

The above case was reported to the city health officer December 18, and some quarantine measures were taken. In the meantime the patient had been in contact with about 30 other prisoners and with the county officers. On December 19 some of the other prisoners who desired it were vaccinated. From December 21, 1921, to January 5, 1922, 18 secondary cases appeared among the prisoners. Nine of these died during the period January 3–13, inclusive. Every prisoner in the jail who had not been vaccinated contracted the disease. Ten prisoners who had been successfully vaccinated within the three preceding years (while in the Army) did not contract the disease, although they were in intimate contact with virulent cases.

On January 5, 1922, five prisoners broke jail and were not apprehended. One was reported to have died in Alabama.

In addition to the cases occurring in jail, 19 cases occurred outside—14 in Poteau and five elsewhere in the county. Of the 14 cases in Poteau, 12 died during the period January 1–18. Of the five cases in outside districts, three died. Vaccination histories of the fatal cases were not obtained. Two cases of varioloid occurred in persons who had been successfully vaccinated December 28, 1921—18 days prior to the appearance of the eruption.

From the original source of infection at the county jail, there occurred 38 cases—four hemorrhagic, two discrete, and 32 confluent in type. There were 24 deaths.

Dr. A. R. Lewis, State health commissioner, and Dr. George Hunter assumed charge of the epidemic January 15 and immediately instituted control measures. Persons who refused to be vaccinated were placed under quarantine. The small towns around Poteau and the neighboring sections of Arkansas enforced strict quarantine against Poteau and in some cases an absolute quarantine against all traffic. It was reported that some towns in Arkansas enforced effective quarantine against persons coming from any place in Oklahoma.

The last severe case of smallpox was quarantined January 5, 1922.

The epidemiological data presented in this report serve to emphasize the value of prompt reporting of cases on the part of physicians and of alertness and vigor on the part of health departments in instituting prompt control measures.

DEATH RATE IN EVERY AGE GROUP LOWER IN 1920 THAN IN 1910.

The Department of Commerce, through the Bureau of the Census, has issued a statement showing deaths and death rates by age groups from different causes in 1910 and in 1920. In every age group the death rate was lower in 1920 than in 1910, the most pronounced change appearing in the rate for infants under 1 year of age, which declined from 13,084 per 100,000 in 1910 to 9,660 per 100,000 in 1920, a decline of about 26 per cent. The death rate for old people above 75 years of age shows a decrease of about 6 per cent, being 13,490 per 100,000 in 1920 as against 14,360 per 100,000 in 1910. In 1910 the death rate for infants was almost as high as it was for old people above 75 years of age, but in 1920 the infantile death rate was only about three-fourths as great as the death rate in old age. Particularly noteworthy is the decrease from 2,581 to 2,280 per 100,000 population in the age group 45 to 74, a decrease of 12 per cent,